United Nations ST/IC/2002/28

Secretariat

8 May 2002

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: **United Nations Staff Relief Committee for Floods in Bolivia**

1. Mother nature struck mercilessly the city of La Paz on Tuesday, 19 February 2002. The storm was the most powerful in the city's history, causing scores of homes to collapse and cutting electricity to the metropolitan area. It is estimated that almost a gallon of water per square foot fell on Bolivia's administrative capital in less than one hour. Because the city is located at the lowest point in a natural bowl, surrounded by the Andes mountains, the torrential rain and hail caused a destructive flood.

2. Bulldozers cleared mud from the streets and rescue workers pulled bodies from swollen rivers around La Paz. Hundreds of people lost their lives or were injured. Many of the families who lost their homes were temporarily sheltered in a local stadium. The dead included a large number of street vendors, who, having run to street underpasses for protection, drowned in flash flooding or were swept away.

3. International relief agencies have generously responded. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which is coordinating reconstruction efforts, pledged $150,000. Although a few countries immediately promised assistance totalling $176,000, many people in La Paz will depend on outside aid for months to come. With the approval of the Secretary-General, the Staff Committee has established a committee of volunteers to appeal for funds from the staff, with a view to alleviating the suffering of the victims. The Staff Relief Committee for Floods in Bolivia is comprised of: Ms. Miriam Málaga as Chairperson, Mr. Ruy Omar Suarez as Treasurer, Mr. Jacob George as Assistant Treasurer and Ms. Maria Renee Luque, Marina Quiroz, Genoveva Wallach and Mekdes Gebre-Medhin as members. Mr. Fernando Astete, First Vice-President of the Staff Committee, is the Coordinator.

4. The collection of contributions will take place during the period from 16 May to 14 June 2002. Staff can also make direct deposits to the following account that has been opened with the United Nations Federal Credit Union for this purpose: United Nations Staff Relief Committee for Bolivia, Account No. 575460 BO.

* Expiration date of the present circular: 30 June 2002.

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5. Staff overseas who would like to contribute to this cause can do so by sending a wire transfer to the Credit Union account number given above, using ABA routing number 2260-7860-9.

6. All contributions will be forwarded to the victims through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.